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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [EAID](#) [NATO](#) [FR](#) [AF](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF U.S.
POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN; OBSTACLES REMAIN ON
FRENCH GENDARME INITIATIVE

REF: A. STATE 29482
[1](#)B. KABUL 751

Classified By: POL MC Kathleen H. Allegrone for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: France welcomes the announcement of the report on U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan in Ref A, MFA A/S-equivalent for Strategic, Security, and Disarmament Affairs Jacques Audibert told Pol M/C on March [1](#)27. In doing its part, France is working with Europeans engaged in the European Gendarme Force (EGF) to deploy about 300 to 450 gendarmes to Afghanistan. The French want to be able to present the gendarme mission initiative as a European contribution at the NATO summit in Strasbourg on April 3-4. Audibert stressed that the EGF mechanism is "European" without needing EU or European Commission approval and that it can be linked up with ESDP and NATO/ISAF because of its flexibility. Although the Italians are blocking the EGF initiative, the French would appreciate U.S. assistance in assuring the Italians that the U.S. concurs with the EGF proposal. That said, the French are prepared to present it as a national contribution, of 150 mentors, if necessary. A senior-level meeting of EGF participants is set for Paris on March 30 to determine likely contributors and modalities for a possible EGF deployment to Afghanistan. In addition, Pierre Lellouche, French Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, has reportedly announced that France will quadruple its aid to Afghanistan in 2009, bringing French aid to 40 million euros (USD 53.3 million). END SUMMARY.

USG Policy Review: French Respond with Gendarme Initiative

[1](#)2. (C) Calling it "very positive news," MFA A/S-equivalent for Strategic, Security, and Disarmament Affairs Jacques Audibert told Pol M/C on March 27 that France welcomes the announcement of the report on U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan in Ref A. In doing its part, France is working with Europeans engaged in the European Gendarme Force (EGF) to deploy about 300 to 450 gendarmes to Afghanistan. The French want to be able to present the gendarme mission initiative as a European contribution at Strasbourg during the NATO Summit on April 3-4. Audibert stressed that the French view the EGF mechanism as "European" without needing EU or European Commission approval and that it can be linked up with ESDP and NATO/ISAF because of its flexibility. Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal have already pledged their support. The French have also reached out to the Turks, who are not part of the EGF. Pol MC reiterated the importance of having the gendarme proposal within the NATO structure.

Obstacles to Gendarme Initiative

13. (C) Audibert said he spent two hours in Rome on March 26 with Carabinieri Corps (Italian gendarmerie) and MFA counterparts trying to bring the Italians on board. The Italians appear to be blocking the initiative on the basis of preferring to use existing structures to send gendarmes to Afghanistan. Since the EGF decision must be by consensus, the Italian position could block the proposal. The French would appreciate U.S. assistance in assuring the Italians that the U.S. has no objection to the EGF proposal. If the Italians maintain their position, then the French will announce their contribution as a French contribution. The MFA got interagency approval -- including from Minister of Interior Aliot-Marie -- on March 26 to send 150 French gendarmes. However, permission to do so was granted only within the EGF, and the French MFA fears it might have to refight the battle because of the Italian position. The French are hosting a senior-level meeting of EGF participants in Paris on March 30 to determine likely contributors and modalities for a possible EGF deployment to Afghanistan.

Increased Economic Assistance to Afghanistan

14. (U) During a recent visit to Kabul (ref b), Pierre Lellouche, Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, on March 24 announced that France would increase aid to Afghanistan from 10 million euros (USD 13.3 million) to 40 million euros (USD 53.3 million) in 2009. In press reports, Lellouche noted that this was an effort by France to help Europe meet the goal of 100 million euros (USD 133 million) annually; he acknowledged that "we had fallen a long way behind." He said that most of the aid would go to sectors

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where France's 3,000 troops were stationed: the Sarubi district, in the province of Kabul, and the province of Kapisa. (Note: Post is seeking confirmation).

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